



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER November 2025

HOUSING HAPPENINGS

First Step is Now Registered with Fred Meyer Community Rewards

Enroll First Step as your charity with Fred Meyer Community Rewards:

Open your Fred Meyer App or go to

<https://www.fredmeyer.com/i/community/community-rewards>

- Click on your account and scroll down to “Community Rewards
- Click on the “Search for your organization here” and enter First Step Florence, then click “enroll this organization”
- Every time you shop First Step earns points towards a quarterly Fred Meyer (Kroger) donation to First Step
- Community Rewards doesn’t impact your personal rewards points

If you need help enrolling in the Rewards program, contact Sandy Craft at 541-590-2325

Thank
You
to all
who
came
out
for the
Sept.
Pancake
Dinner
!!!

VISION
REFRESH

TOGETHER WE THRIVE
SIUSLAW COMMUNITY CELEBRATION STORIES

SIUSLAW VISION
A Better Community Together

HAPPY PEOPLE: First Step Florence

"Our families receive services that address their basic needs, including guidance and assistance in transitioning to more stable situations".
Sandy Craft,
First Step Florence

FIRST STEP FLORENCE
Transitional Housing for Families

Board President Insights

We've been waiting a long time to start building... and we're still waiting — but we're getting closer every day!

Working with **Architects Without Borders**, we've selected both a design and a provider for the housing units we plan to use. Our choice is an affordable, functional manufactured home that will provide a **safe, comfortable, and inspiring space** for our families.

We are excited about working with **Hope Community Corporation**, a subsidiary of St. Vincent de Paul. This collaboration will allow us to work alongside a nonprofit that shares our values and is already making a difference in the Eugene/Springfield community.

One major reason for our delay has been **funding**. We've been waiting to hear about a **\$400,000 USDA Rural Housing Grant**. Grant award notifications were originally expected in October, but the government shutdown put everything on hold. As of this writing, we're still waiting for the final word. If the grant comes through, you may just hear our shouts of joy all across town! And In the meantime, Sandy has been hard at work pursuing other public and private grants to help fund our village expansion.

Even as we wait, our **program remains active and vibrant**. Since our last newsletter, we've hosted three families in the foldable house and three more in other parts of the village. **Participant Advocate, Melanie Moreno**, continues to meet weekly with families, helping them make plans and stay on track — and she's doing an outstanding job.

Vice President, Paul Pearson, has stepped up as our village repair specialist. Over the past three years, he's become quite the expert on RV maintenance, plumbing issues, and electrical systems. We're deeply grateful for his dedication and care for our participants.

The **Board of Directors** continues to guide our work and plan for First Step's future. We're currently looking to add a **few more members** — especially someone with financial planning or budgeting experience. However, we also welcome anyone who has a heart for our mission and a willingness to serve families striving for a brighter future.

If you'd like to volunteer or nominate someone for the Board, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Warm regards, *Greg.*

Welcome Aboard the First Step Board of Directors~ Brooke Golen shares:

I was born in Casa Grande, Arizona and we lived in Colorado for a bit when I was young. After taking a trip across country, my parents came back and decided that we were moving to Northwest Arkansas. I grew up mostly out in the woods, near the lake, somewhat of a feral child. I would have it no other way. It helped shape me into who I am today! After graduation I moved to Fayetteville, AR and had my two children, Halle and Dezmond. After my brother graduated my parents picked up and moved to Cottage Grove, OR. The kids and I would come spend some time in Oregon here and there. After the kids and I moved to Phoenix, Arizona I missed my family who were now in Florence, OR. So here we are, ten years later. Both of my kiddos have since graduated from Siuslaw High School. I have been working at Senior & Disability Services since we moved here in 2015.

The First Step mission is dear to me because as a single parent raising two children, our little family pod definitely experienced our struggles. There were times when we only got by using the community resources available. Sometimes all you need to be able to take that "first step" is a little help, support, and kindness. I'm grateful for this opportunity to give back to families in need. WELCOME, Brooke !



Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.

Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.

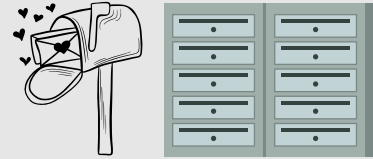
From the desk of Community Development. . .



Sandy Craft, our Community Development Liaison, has been working diligently this past year successfully raising funds to cover the FSF operational costs. Having these funds enables us to provide direct program services to enrolled unhoused families with children. This month, and for all of 2026, Sandy and the Board are launching a Capital Giving Campaign titled **"Building With Compassion"**. Our intention is to **raise \$500K** to build four housing units and develop our capacity to serve more unhoused families on the property FSF owns. More information on this coming soon!

Sandy will be appealing to private foundations, corporate funders, banking institutions, local businesses, and First Step's loyal individual donors/supporters.

Watch your mailbox for the annual end of year giving letter being mailed this month!



Finding Stability: A Success Story of Resilience

After months of dedication and perseverance, another participant has successfully graduated from the First Step temporary housing program and moved into a permanent home with their two children. This achievement marks a major milestone in their journey toward stability, independence, and self-sufficiency.

During their time in the program, the participant worked closely with our FSF Advocate to set goals, build financial stability, and strengthen family routines. Through determination and a strong desire to create a better life for their children, they overcame numerous challenges and steadily built a foundation for long-term success.

Now living independently, this family serves as an inspiring example of how support, hard work, and community resources can come together to create lasting change. We congratulate them on this incredible accomplishment and wish them continued success in their new chapter.

Thank you for your on-going support!

- Melanie, Participant Advocate



***Grateful you ate pancakes and supported First Step with donations of \$1035 ***





Board Members
Greg Wood, President
Paul Pearson, Vice President
Deb Anderson
Brooke Golen
Donna Gregg
Norma Wood
Rebecca McMinn (LOA)

3rd quarter volunteer hours total: 282

Thank you for your service, Ivy Meadow who

is pursuing other volunteer work and
Rebecca McMinn, who is on extended leave
of Absence. And WELCOME Deb Anderson
and Brooke Golen to the FSF Board.



For General Information about First Step
contact:

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To make referrals contact:

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541.999.6861

To make donations:
www.florencefirststep.org

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and on instagram @ fsfhousing